

Responding to Nosy Questions

Mandi of *A Blog About Miscarriage*

- 1) Always assume the best.** While we all unfortunately seem to know the person who insists on continuing to ask hurtful questions or make rude comments after being *repeatedly* informed how and why they are inappropriate, the truth is that most people really do not mean to be offensive. Most questions and comments, no matter how misguided, are well intentioned. If I keep in mind that the speaker means well and is only trying to be kind, I'm much more likely to respond with the same intention.
- 2) Be charitable.** No matter how rude a question, if the person who posed it meant to be kind, she doesn't deserve a rude response. And even if she meant to be rude, she probably doesn't deserve a rude response anyway. Turn the other cheek, be the bigger person, and all that. Honestly, I usually walk away from conversation feeling much worse because I said a rude response than because someone asked me a rude question. It's much easier to brush off what someone else says than to forgive myself for making knee-jerk comments or trying to put the other person in her place. We cannot control what other people say to us, but we can control how we respond and I want to be a witness to Christ in all situations. Sometimes that means biting my tongue and practicing a huge heaping of patience and self-control.
- 3) Don't say more than you're comfortable saying.** Being charitable does not mean you have to answer questions you don't want to answer or share private information. Smiling and saying, "I'm sorry, I don't want to talk about that," can be just as charitable a response as an actual answer to a question. A rude comment doesn't even have to be responded to - you can change the topic of conversation or excuse yourself. If someone keeps pushing, you're perfectly justified in defending your desire not to say any more and remove yourself from the situation. As long as it's done with a kind or neutral tone of voice, I think deflecting a question back to the questioner is perfectly acceptable as well: "Why do you ask?" or "My, that's a very personal question!"
- 4) On the other hand, feel free to tell the truth.** I sometimes respond to questions about our family size by mentioning my miscarriages. It usually makes the other person uncomfortable. My intention is never to make the person uncomfortable, but sometimes I like the truth to be known. And I don't think that I should feel like I have to keep my miscarriages to myself because they tend to be taboo topics in our society. In fact, I think it can be helpful to talk about them so they are no longer a cause of secret pain and shame. You have no obligation to answer but if you feel comfortable doing so, you shouldn't feel like you need to keep the truth secret; after all, the other person did ask. But even if you do feel like you want the truth out there, know that you control the conversation and you **don't** have to answer follow up questions.

5) Pray for strength and the right words. Especially if you're headed to an event where you know you're going to be confronted with difficult question or comments (or people)! Also, feel free to pause for a second and ask for the help of the Holy Spirit when you feel yourself facing an awkward question or comment. Sometimes just giving yourself the time to collect yourself and bring prayer into the question makes the difference between a gracious and not-so-gracious response.

6) Be prepared. We can't be prepared for every question or comment we may receive. There are truly some, ahem, let me say *interesting* people out there who will say some *very unique* things and there is no way to see those coming. But I think most of us know the kind of questions or comments we're liable to get, whether it's the 30-something single woman who often gets questions about why she's not married, the mother of five who hears "You've got your hands full!" and "Are you done?" ad nauseam, or the couple with no child after years of marriage who is hounded to "start a family already!" Having a prepared answer to the most common awkward questions and comments I receive takes a bit of the fumbling out of answering. I don't always stick to my "pat answer" depending on the situation, but I can always lean back on it if I'm not up to thinking anything through.

Here are a couple of my prepared responses to common questions/comments:

When are you going to have another baby? I'm not sure. You can't always plan these things.

What are you waiting for? We're waiting for God to answer our prayers.

Do you want more children? Yes.

Is Lucia an only child? Yes, so far.

Oh, you only have one child. We're so blessed with Lucia.

You're waiting a long time to have your second. I know, it's definitely a lesson in patience.

Have you tried Creighton/NaPro/progesterone/this fertility treatment? Yes. or No.

As you can tell, I like brevity.

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